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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of eight developed both as resource guides to assist Wisconsin public schools in offering quality reading instruction and as models for improvement where there is a need for change. This fourth booklet defines the need for organizing an effective public relations program in local Right to Read effort. Methods of disseminating information to the public are listed and sample news releases for newspaper and radio use are offered, along with suggestions for utilizing television coverage. Appended is an annotated bibliography of eight publicity and public relations resources. (AEA)

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Wisconsin
Handbook for Reading Improvement

Section D- Publicity & Public Relations

developed by
Wisconsin Right to Read Effort

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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FOREWORD

The ability to read assumes added dimensions and relevance in a constantly changing world. There is increased national and state emphasis on improved reading instruction in public schools in response to changing needs. To equip learners to function effectively as adults in this climate of change, educators are charged with the complex task of offering instruction which will permit all learners to read to the limit of their potential.

The materials in this handbook are presented for two reasons: (1) to provide resources which will assist Wisconsin public schools to continue to offer high quality reading instruction, and (2) to provide a model for improvement where the need for change has become evident. The concepts and activities presented are representative of methods and approaches which hopefully will lead to a keener understanding and full-scale implementation of the components of an effective K-12 reading program.

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Wisconsin Handbook for Reading Improvement

Section A- The National, State & Local Right to Read Effort
Section B- Right to Read & the Community
Section C- Advisory Councils
Section D- Publicity & Public Relations
Section E- Assessment
Section F- Staff Roles & Responsibilities
Section G- Inservice
Section H- Volunteer Programs

SECTION D

PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communicating With Local Citizens

Any program such as a local Right to Read effort, which has community involvement as a major component, necessarily relies on a variety of publicity/public relations activities. Communication should be an on-going two-way process. The general public might be informed at the following stages of program development:

Selection of local Right to Read director (s) and subsequent participation in a training program

Development of a local Right to Read Advisory Council

Authorization of Right to Read activities by the Board of Education or other governing bodies

Assessment of needs and resources. Here the public might be asked to respond to a questionnaire, or volunteer their help in conducting the survey

Publication of the results of the assessment

Subsequent establishment of Right to Read goals and objectives

Special projects being planned and implemented

New segments of the population being served or expanded opportunities offered

Requests for volunteers to help in an educational program as tutors, aides, library clerks, "grandparents," etc.

Human interest stories about people being helped by Right to Read

Results of an evaluation of local efforts

Needless to say, if some sort of communication is initiated at most of these intervals, the community should become very much aware of the existence of Right to Read. They might then begin to ask themselves if they would like to be involved as Task Force members, volunteers or students. Because the success of Right to Read depends so much on the effective use of existing human resources, a well-planned public relations program cannot be overlooked.

Staff members in local educational institutions can serve Right to Read in many ways. They are in a strategic position to offer professional advice and services that will ultimately affect the quality of the educational programs initiated or improved through Right to Read. In addition, educators could easily feel alienated if they are not kept current with Right to Read developments; they may feel that lay citizens are imposing their standards and advice on them without requesting professional input from them. Educators form an important part of the community which should not be overlooked.

Responsibility For Publicity

Every local Right to Read director should be sensitive to the already existing public relations program in the institution he/she serves. There are a number of avenues which could be followed in pinpointing responsibility for public relations activities. Whichever one is selected, it should be in harmony with previously established methods of information dissemination.

Below are listed people or groups who might have the publicity responsibilities for Right to Read:

The local Right to Read director (s)

The public information staff member (s) at the institution involved in Right to Read

A designated administrator

The Chairperson of the Right to Read Advisory Council

A specially-selected Advisory Council liaison person for publicity

A Task Force of the Advisory Council

A volunteer teacher, layperson, etc.

Public Relations as Two-Way Communication

You can expect many questions to be asked when the public begins to become aware of Right to Read. Some people will want to know how they can help; others will request information about reading/literacy programs to help themselves, a friend or a family member; still others will want to comment on the quality of services presently available or question the cost or justification of a local Right to Read program.

A person should be designated who will receive and respond to communication from the public. The local Right to Read director is in a good position to do this, for he/she can provide feedback on many topics, refer the person to someone else for further information or find out an answer and respond later to the person. However the feedback is handled, it is imperative that the citizen feel that his/her response was welcomed, considered and important. This helps spread "ownership" in Right to Read and provides a

continuing source of new perspectives on Right to Read efforts.

Methods of Communication

Listed below are some of the ways information can be disseminated to the public.

Word-of-mouth — Although this is very often the least reliable means of disseminating information, it exists everywhere. Students talk among each other and with their parents; parents talk among each other and with significant others in their daily lives; teachers talk among each other and with their family and friends; and so on. Good news and bad news, whether it is accurate or not, travels quickly by word-of-mouth.

Parent-teacher conferences — This is a traditional method by which parents visit the educational facility and discuss their children's work with the teacher. It is an effective way of communicating with those parents who do come, but by itself it is inadequate.

Parental education programs — Special sessions can be designed to help parents deal with day-to-day concerns they have in raising their children. Some program topics might include teaching pre-reading skills to preschoolers, reinforcing reading in the home, approaches used in the schools to teach and parents as reading models.

Newsletters — A Right to Read newsletter might be created, or a special reading/literacy section could be added to existing organizational or institutional publications. Newsletters reach only those people on the mailing list, and not necessarily the community at large.

Pamphlets — Brochures are inexpensive to produce, fairly easy to prepare and can be disseminated in a variety of ways. They can be sent home with students, distributed at meetings, mailed or displayed at places where the public gathers such as libraries, office waiting rooms or at county fairs.

Bulletin boards and display areas — Schools, libraries, department stores, churches and banks are just a few of the locations where Right to Read information could be exhibited. Bulletin boards and display cases do not usually require a person there to answer questions; however, if you set up a display or booth at a public function, it is a good idea to reinforce the dissemination by having at least one person there at all times to offer one-to-one contact with the people who stop to see the display.

Speeches, presentations, etc. — The local Right to Read director, Advisory Council members and other interested people can be scheduled to give speaches or offer presentations on Right to Read at professional, civic or social organizational meetings or local conferences and workshops. Followed by a question and answer period or an opportunity for informal exchange, this information dissemination method can be very effective.

Mass media — Radio, television and newspapers provide an excellent source for initiating communication with the public. The remainder of this section of the Manual will deal primarily with the mass media and how to deal with them.

Newspapers

Because of its usually wide range of readership, the local newspaper can be one of the Right to Read director's most effective sources for publicity. If the newspaper already has a regular education column or feature, reports on the local Right to Read program should be well received. It is a good policy to get to know the editors and reporters and inquire about submitting news items.

A personal visit to the newspaper office is a good way to begin. Take a list of questions to help you understand the operating procedures of that newspaper. Some questions you might ask are:

1. Whom do you contact when special events occur?
2. In what form should the article be written?
3. What are the deadlines?
4. What type of photographs are acceptable?

Keep the newspaper informed by telephone, written communication and personal contact. This will help the newspaper personnel gain confidence in you and in the accuracy and reliability of your material. Be easily accessible so that the newspaper staff can check details or request supplemental material or photographs.

In addition to the local newspaper, keep the school paper informed on the progress of the Right to Read program. Student media can be a source of support to the program.

News Releases

Keep the article about Right to Read informative, interesting and brief. Be sure to give the important facts first. The lead paragraph should contain the who, what, when, where, why and how of the news release. Elaboration can follow where time and space permit. Try not to confuse the readers with educational jargon while avoiding the temptation to "talk down" to them.

Below are some suggestions for writing news releases:

1. Be factual and objective. Try to avoid unnecessary adjectives.
2. Keep your sentences clear and concise.
3. Avoid educational jargon whenever possible. Try to define any new terms the public would need to know.
4. Be accurate. Identify program strengths, but do not be negligent in recognizing areas where improvement is needed.
5. Give sources for all quotes and identify them precisely.
6. Remember to write in the third person, unless the tone of the publication warrants a different style.
7. Relate to the public's experiences whenever possible.
8. At the outset identify the complete names and positions of everyone who will be mentioned later in the article.

9. Keep in contact with the Right to Read Office in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to keep your articles factual and current with other developments.

10. Encourage other staff members to contribute articles and inform them of their impact after they are printed.

11. Remain in contact with the same person on the newspaper staff to avoid confusion in format, release date, etc.

12. Find out if the newspaper requires you to follow a standard form when submitting news items. Sometimes this varies from newspaper to newspaper.

The following pages offer some sample news releases for your review.

Sample News Release

RIGHT TO READ DIRECTOR IS NAMED

_____, _____,
A (Name of R2R director) (title)
has been designated as local Right to Read director for_____
(location)

He/she will receive intensive training in those procedures necessary to develop a community literacy program which meets existing reading needs at all levels.

_____ states, "First it will be necessary to organize a lo-
(Last name of director)
cal Right to Read Advisory Council which will help the community evaluate its preschool, in-school and adult literacy programs and establish priorities based upon needs. Then we can begin to eliminate duplication of effort and close gaps in reading services to all citizens. Our community," continues_____,
(Last name of director)
"will definitely benefit from participation in the Right to Read program because it emphasizes improvement of reading programs based on needs and available resources."

Sample News Release

CAPTION FOR ATTACHED PHOTO

NEW RIGHT TO READ DIRECTOR — _____,
(name of local director)
newly appointed director of the local Right to Read program at_____,
(location)
receives congratulations from_____,
(name)
School Superintendent. The announcement was made yesterday at the regular faculty meeting.

Photo of Local Director
And School Superintendent

Sample News Release

RIGHT TO READ MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

A series of Right to Read staff meetings for the fall have been announced at the_____
School. The faculty will receive inservice training to help them in a number of critical areas of the local Right to Read effort.

_____, Right to Read director at the school, indicates that the teachers have
(Name of R_2R director)
been involved in planning these meetings, and the "staff is eagerly awaiting the initiation of the program."
The meeting dates and tentative topics to be covered include:

Date	(Sample) Topic
_____	*Developing a Needs Assessment*
_____	*Establishing Priorities in the Reading Program*
_____	*Reading in the Content Areas*
_____	*Grouping in the Classroom*

Sample News Release

RIGHT TO READ CONSULTANT TO SPEAK TO TEACHERS AT _____ SCHOOL

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____, _____,
(title)
will speak to the teachers and staff at the _____ School as a part of the Right to Read program for _____.
(year)

_____ will be the chief speaker at the inservice meeting on _____.
(Last name of the consultant) (Date)
The staff will have the opportunity to react and respond during a question and answer period.

(Give background of the consultant here.)

Sample News Release

RIGHT TO READ FILM TO BE VIEWED BY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

At next week's regular meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, _____,
(Local R_2R director)
Right to Read director for _____, will present the film entitled "The Right to
(community)
Read" outlining the national goals of the program.

This film, produced by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, dramatically illustrates the reading crisis in the nation and depicts some suggested solutions. The film has meaning and impact to all members of our community, parents and concerned citizens, as well as educators.

_____ will guide a question and answer period following the film. He/she is cur-
(Last name of the local director)
rently involved in implementing the Right to Read program in _____.
(location)

Radio

Radio stations can reach much of your identified audience in an immediate and effective way. Many local stations will provide the Right to Read director with a variety of opportunities for keeping the community informed of the progress of the local Right to Read effort.

Public service announcements can be used to announce meeting dates and scheduled topics or speakers. They are sponsored by stations, usually free of charge, as a means of keeping the community abreast of local or civic events. As with news releases, it is recommended that you keep public service announcements short and concise.

Some stations also have news features similar to the "Community Bulletin Board," in which regular community happenings are announced at periodically scheduled times. Advise these stations well in advance of meeting dates and other Right to Read functions.

Other regularly highlighted programs can be utilized to discuss in greater depth the progress and thrust of the local Right to Read effort. Some stations welcome and encourage interview or panel discussion formats which also lend themselves to an extensive discussion of the development of the Right to Read program. If you are including outside consultants to assist in various aspects of the Right to Read effort, use the interview or tape-replay on the radio to keep the public informed.

Becoming acquainted with staff at local radio stations can be an asset to the publicity program. Although not all local stations have the staff to cover all of the school functions you or they might desire, frequently one staff member is assigned to "community events." The use of the material that is submitted can be ensured if it is kept light, interesting, devoid of educational jargon, and limited to three or four well-written sentences. Try to design the material to be in accord with the station's time and promotional needs.

On the next two pages you will find sample radio releases.

Sample Radio Release

For release: *Week of October 7-11*

Subject: *Right to Read Inservice Meeting*

Time: *Approximately 15-30 seconds*

ANNOUNCER: Teachers at the _____ school today will be attending the next meeting in a series of inservice education sessions as a part of the Wisconsin State Right to Read program.
(location)

With schools closing after the noon hour, the _____ school staff will be receiving training in the methods to improve reading instruction in the classroom. This is the _____ in a series of _____ tentative meetings. The Right to Read program marches on . . .
(location) (number) (number)

Sample Radio Release

For release: *Week of November 4-8*

Subject: *Right to Read at the PTA Meeting*

Time: *Approximately 30-45 seconds*

ANNOUNCER: The regular meeting of the _____ school PTA, to be held next Monday night, November 11th, will feature a presentation on the Right to Read program. _____ will highlight Right to Read goals and special activites. As local R2R director, he/she will be working closely with community members to improve reading opportunity for all.
(location) (Local R2R director)

At the 8 p.m. meeting next Monday night—that's November 11th—parents will be able to ask questions concerning the _____ Right to Read program.
(location)

Refreshments will be served.

Television

Consider local television as a very effective means to communicate Right to Read activities and developments to the public. Local commercial television stations, like radio stations, frequently broadcast short notices about local activities and school events. If informed of the purposes and objectives of Right to Read, local television stations may suggest a format well-suited to sharing with their audiences infomation about local efforts and activities.

The guidelines for televison news releases follow closely those designed for radio. "Community Bulletin Board" announcements and "fillers" around the local station breaks can often be appropriately utilized. Local stations suggest that matte finish photos be submitted (another obvious advantage over radio), but glossy photos are also acceptable.

Inquire about interview or panel discussion programs that are regularly scheduled. Television program directors are usually receptive to new developments in education. The Right to Read program can meet this need with continuous progress reports. A narrated slide presentation about your local program would be most interesting to viewers, and would have many uses later.

Checklist
Right to Read Publicity Public Relations

_____ Identify the established avenues for communicating with students, educators, other professionals and lay citizens.

_____ Constantly seek or create new ways of disseminating information about Right to Read to specific population segments or to the general public. Community "Koffee Klatches" or a "Right to Read Hot Line" are just a few of the new techniques you might want to try.

_____ Be aware of the communication techniques which will be most effective and appealing to those you are attempting to reach.

_____ Tap the resources and talent available on your staff, the Advisory Council or in the community, for contributions to the publicity effort.

_____ Plan to issue frequent and concise news releases whenever possible. Make sure the releases are neither too lengthy or sporadic.

_____ When a piece of communication is prepared by a single individual, encourage a cooperative spirit by involving others in parts of the total process such as proofreading, writing headlines or captions, taking photographs, creating illustrations, etc.

_____ Involve students whenever possible. They can prepare news releases, give presentations over the intercom, submit articles for publication in the school newspaper or provide artwork for Right to Read publications.

_____ Consider including on the Advisory Council or a Task Force someone with a background in mass media communication.

_____ Use both formal channels of communication. Do not overlook personal contact as a viable method of communicating with a select audience.

_____ Develop methods for feedback and evaluation of your communication channels. This can be done formally with a survey form or inventory, or informally through frequent discussion or personal contact.

_____ Involve parents in the preparation, distribution, evaluation and expansion of community publicity efforts.

_____ Prepare progress reports that summarize Right to Read accomplishments for distribution to:

The Board of Education or other governing body
Advisory council and Task Force members
Administrators, faculty, staff
Students
Parents
Civic and community groups
Interested educational institutions in the county or surrounding areas.

_____ Utilize a variety of media in your publicity efforts.

Publicity Plan

Objective: By _____, an ongoing Right to Read publicity/public relations program will be functioning.

Activity	Medium for Dissemination	Person (s) Responsible	Completion Date
1. Set up a Right to Read booth at the county fair	One-to-One contact, pamphlets, handouts	Advisory Council Chairperson	
a. Reserve space		Publicity Chairperson	February 1
b. Determine what materials and equipment are needed		Publicity Task Force	February 15
c. Collect materials to be used in the display and to be distributed	Slide-tape presentation	Publicity Task Force	June 1
d. Make a portable set of Right to Read display panels	Photographs, bulletin board type format	Publicity Task Force	July 15
e. Publicize the booth in advance	Radio, newspaper	Publicity Chairperson	August 1
f. Schedule volunteers to work in the booth		Publicity Chairperson	July 1
g. Have the booth open at the fair (RIF Booth)		Publicity Task Force	August 12-15
h. Report on the activity upon completion	Written report	Publicity Task Force	September 1
2. Write a monthly news release for the local newspaper	etc.		

PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Alexander B. *Apollo Handbook of Practical Public Relations.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970.

This book tells how to start and how to carry out a good public relations program. It presents the mechanics of basic public relations methods as well as many excellent illustrations and examples.

Budd, John F. Jr. *An Executive's Primer on Public Relations.* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Chilton, 1969.

This resource provides a clear, concise view of public relations. It shows what good public relations can do for neighborhood relations. It presents a realistic view of the basic functions of public relations.

Clay, Roberta. *Promotion in Print, A Guide for Publicity Chairmen.* New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1970.

Here is a practical guide for the nonprofessional news writer. Suggestions about public information for schools, churches, clubs, etc., is included. The book answers such questions as: What is news? How do you write news? and How do you maintain friendly relations with the media?

Hall, Babette. *Public Relations, Publicity, and Promotion.* New York: Ives Washburn, Inc., 1970, pp. 90-100.

The chapter on pages 90-100 discusses basic activities to provide organizations with effective public relations. It presents some basic rules directed toward community groups in their efforts to develop good promotional practices.

Johnson, Ray E. *Making the Most of Radio-TV.* New York: National Public Relations Council of Health and Welfare Services, Inc., 1966.

This book is aimed primarily for use by local community organizations and agencies. It suggests ways to make the best use of radio and television. It covers such areas as: News Releases, Radio Interviews, Panel and Talk Programs, Spot Announcements and Tips for TV Appearances. The appendix offers several examples of spot announcements and news releases.

McMahan, John H. *Productive Press Relations.* New York: National Public Relations Council of Health and Welfare Services, Inc., 1968.

Provided here are suggestions on how to promote public understanding, acceptance and support of your organization goals and methods. It stresses the need to deal with the press in a professional way.

Otto, Wayne and Smith, Richard J. *Administering the School Reading Program.* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970. pp. 143-154.

The chapter on pp. 143-154 presents an excellent method by which community organizations can develop effective public relations programs. It presents three categories designed to develop good public relations and cites many excellent examples.

Publicity Handbook, A Guide for Publicity Chairmen. Fort Worth, Texas: Consumer Services, The Sperry and Hutchinson Co., 1972.

This book contains step-by-step directions for developing good public relations and publicity techniques. It includes sections on the basic elements of good publicity, preparing a news story and working with the news media.

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